1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

Ma te-
237 rials which could well be made use of, such as skin, bone, and shell, are hardly used at all. Putnam claims that they are not used in his [189] area, although he writes that sometimes the Pygmies wear horn charms borrowed or stolen from the villagers. Virtually no use other than magical is made of bone, horn, or shell, as far as one can tell from reports from any part of the Ituri. Among the archers there are few of the skin quivers and bow covers mentioned by [252] Schebesta (1952, 124). Putnam (MS) further [162] states that he has never known these Pygmies to skin game; they cook and eat the skin as well as the flesh.

237 Schebesta (1952, 124), however, writes that 41 hide quivers are plentiful, particularly in the western part of the forest, less so among the archers in the east, where arrows are always carried in a bundle held in the left hand. Schebesta (1952, 124) also mentions the wrist protector, made of monkey skin, used by archers. He makes other reference to the use of 237 skin as belts and for adornment and, occasion- [191] ally, the use of the skin of a Colobus monkey to 301 cover the back, but he does not specify to which [184] Mbuti his remarks apply. We assume that, unless he specifies otherwise, he refers to the archers among whom he worked on his second trip.

(P. 165-B)

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

There are different types of knives, some hafted, some unhafted, always worn in the belt by women and used for preparing food and for sharpening the pointed sticks used by them in both gathering activities and in cooking. Other items that might be found in or around an Efe archer hut include hunting equipment, such as a bow and quiver of arrows (Figs. 6–9), a dog bell (Fig. 7i), an ax for cutting small saplings and sometimes used in the search for honey, an ivory or wooden beater for barkcloth, clay pipe bowls (Fig. 5), hide slings for carrying children, and a few personal possessions such as hunting charms. Of exceptional interest, perhaps, is the basketry press (Fig. 11), used among the archers for extraction of juice from fruits.

## DRESS AND ORNAMENTATION

Clothing consists mainly of barkcloth worn tucked between the legs. The upper part of the body is rarely covered, and then only by a skin cape worn over the shoulders by old men. Basketry caps are worn by men, and sometimes fur bands which may also be worn on the arm. Schebesta also mentions bracelets of shredded bark. Both men and women may wear, around the upper arm or wrist, fiber cords to which small pieces of wood, teeth, and other charms are attached. Leaves, flowers, nuts, and feathers

[P.167–D]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 168-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

sued and shot with bow and arrow whenever the opportunity arises but are never the object of organized hunting. Other smaller animals and birds are hunted individually; those that take refuge in holes in trees are smoked out. 224 [262]

Schebesta's account suggests that, despite his proficiency at the hunt, the Pygmy takes care to protect himself against its attendant dangers and disappointments by securing the cooperation of the God of the Forest, and of his ancestors, and by making use of magic. He carries charms, observes various taboos, and performs certain rites—mostly sympathetic. It is not clearly stated, however, exactly which rites and charms are used by which particular Pygmies; there is obviously a great deal of variation. Schebesta clearly indicates, however, that among the archers there seems to be a considerable amount of hunting magic and ritual, witnessed by their use of the special whistles (*Efe: segbe*), magic formulas, invocation, and ritual practices he describes. 224 [78] [176] [169]

[P. 173-C]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

After giving birth, the mother keeps her infant in the shade of her hut for three or four days, receiving visits from admiring neighbors. The infant is protected by various charms and amulets attached to its elbow and wrist. It is fed whenever it cries. When the mother does leave her hut, carrying the infant on her back, she protects it from the sun by covering it with a leaf. When it is bigger she carries it without a supporting sling, either on her hip or on her back. The child is always with her, and she devotes her spare time to playing with it and singing to it. Even when dancing she may carry it in a sling at her side.

The child is taught to walk almost as soon as it is big enough to be allowed on the ground alone. This process is sometimes hastened by scratching its knee and placing a fast-moving beetle (*pakalakala*) in the blood, then allowing it to run away. Soon, the mother believes, her child will be running as fast as the beetle.

Breast feeding is continued for about a year; sometimes a child continues to be breast fed while it is able to run about the camp. But from a few weeks after its birth it is introduced gradually to vegetable foods.

Fathers, although Schebesta writes that they do not like to be bothered with infants, help their wives in the care of children and even attend to their personal needs.

[P. 178 - D]

I: Turnbull S-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1985 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

[D.192-C]

notions and practices of the archers and their totemism in their belief in *megbe*, the vital force dispensed, in part, by the divinity. It is one of the life principles, distinct from that which becomes a star or a sprite after death. *Megbe* is transformed anew into the totem when the body dies. The divinity possesses it in totality; astral beings are endowed with far more *megbe* than mortals; hence, their greater power and strength which derive from *megbe*. Mortals, then, have to reinforce their store of this vital force to give themselves additional strength and power. There are certain practices by which this may be achieved, notably by the use of bells hung about different parts of the body. When a man dies, his son may put his lips to those of his father to capture the *megbe* as it passes from his body.

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By increasing his store of *megbe* the Mbuti can place himself on the same level as supernatural beings with whom he must have dealings. Schebesta cites legends showing how the Mbuti managed to steal fire from Tore by the use of bells to increase their *megbe*. [773]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1956) 1985 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

Various rites and magical instruments are logically consistent with this notion: the *segbe* pipes that are able to deflect the storm, attract game, or defeat the enemy; the magic horn of the *maigwa* antelope that seeks out thieves; and the various charms and amulets used by hunters either on their bodies or on their weapons. Certain animals are reputed to possess an abundance of *megbe*, notably crows, crabs, the snake (*magwda*), the antelope (*maigwa*), the chameleon, the toad, and the tortoise.

According to various legends, menstrual blood is also possessed of magical force.

Opposed to *megbe* is *ude*, the force of black magic. As mentioned above, the archer accepts death as inevitable, the recalling by God of *bere e'i*, the life principle Schebesta translates as "soul." But death may be caused by sorcerers through the use of *ude*. *Ude* is associated with menstrual blood, and Schebesta compares this notion with the legends that explain one cause of death as being the curiosity or greed of woman. This second cause of death, through *ude*, is thus attributed to the "original sin" of woman, who from curiosity or greed violated God's laws or lured man to do so.

Cooremans (1938) and Boelaert (1936a) both criticize Schebesta on this point, saying that the material does not justify his conclu-

[P. 192-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

(NET HUNTERS)

[P. 197-A]

truly nomadic group. All metal knife and ax blades are obtained ready-made from the villagers, also metal arrow and spearheads (which are frequently used as knives). The hafting and fitting of shafts may be done by the Pygmy himself, and certainly the arrow shafts are Pygmy-made. Open-mesh baskets (Fig. 41) are made by the women, who also obtain close-mesh baskets (Fig. 42) from the villagers.

## DRESS AND ORNAMENTATION

Clothing of the net hunters is also similar to that described by Schebesta, but with less ornamentation of fur and skin and less use of charms and amulets. Putnam denies the use of skins for clothing among the Pygmies he knows. Anne Putnam ranks the manufacture of barkcloth as the major industry in a net-hunting camp, occupying even more time than the making and repair of nets. Putnam once said that the Pygmies did not make nets, but obtained them from the villagers; later, he changed his opinion.[1] A net is never made complete, but in the course of repair pieces are added or removed to start a new net.

I: Turnbull E-4. 8 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.225-A]

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FIG. 51. Magical paraphernalia, net hunters, Epulu District, Central Ituri. a. Pipe, *ekkeka*, attached to fur headband; worn by a few net hunters, the pipe sometimes being blown before they set out on a hunt. b. Wooden whistle, *angbela*. c. Antelope horn, *anjo*, used to carry paste sometimes smeared on the face to heighten the senses of smell, sound, and sight. d. Honey whistle, *madi*, used during the honey season for "calling" the honey. e. Honey whistle, *madi*. f. Hunting whistle, *manyengi*, found in northwest area; stuck in the ground near a special hunting fire in the camp and pointing in the direction in which the hunt has gone.

[237]
[128]
[222]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1961 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

Above all, the outstanding singer, however young (so long as he is a hunter, therefore qualified to participate, of course), plays one of the most important roles in the meeting of the *molimo* society. In the *molimo*, respect for skill in song and dance seem, from the material to hand, to surpass respect even for skill in hunting and for old age.

## RELIGIOUS LIFE

The religion of the net hunters is far less well documented than that of the archers, since little is known beyond what Schebesta (1950) writes of the "Sua" regarding their religious terminology, notions of God, and afterlife. On the other hand, the functioning of their men's religious association (*molimo*) is far better documented than that of the *ture* association of the archers, both in Mrs. Putnam's notes and my own (1960b).

As far as magical practices are concerned, little information is available beyond a few isolated descriptions of various ceremonies mainly concerned with the hunt or the weather. Many practices are certainly of village origin, and some practices that are shared by both groups have different functions. Thus the naturally distorted stick (Fig. 53), known as *amati a ovi gawa* (the tortoise saw the circumcision), is for the villagers a magical protection against

[P. 235-D]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 236-B]

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Mbuti
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[NET HUNTERS]
D-236-A)

Fig. 11. a-b. Fetish sticks, *emumi a ewi* genus, Bira villagers, Central Ituri. "The termites saw the circumcision" is the name of the stick, but neither villagers nor Mbuti can give a coherent explanation of either the stick or its name. The villagers use it for protection against thefts; the Mbuti net hunters on rare occasions may slip pieces of it in the ground near a mallow leaves as an indication of spiritual presence.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

theft, but among the Mbuti is used as indication of spiritual presence during the *molimo* festival.

For this section we follow the same outline as that for the archers, but a fuller account of the net-hunters' magico-religious complex is given in the final section (pp. 248–259). It is excluded from the present survey because the lack of

[P. 236-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 238-A]

788 [782] [224] any other god or spiritual being for protection or aid. Mbuti ritual, such as it is, is simply "A number of symbolic actions performed as parts of technological operations in order to smooth over the disturbance caused by some kind of change," e.g., the elephant-hunting ritual in which the youngest male descendant of the hunter ritually pierces the elephant's side and opens the operations dividing the meat for consumption (cf. p. 207).

771 [776] Putnam, further, was never convinced that the Mbuti had any notion similar to the European notion of God. He disagrees strongly with Schebesta's interpretation of Mbuti religious practice as indicating a belief in a personal god. [789] He suggests that the ritual practices described by Schebesta were, in fact, no more than sympathetic magic, and that a belief in the direct cause and effect in their magical practices is the only kind of "religious" belief that can safely be ascribed to the forest dwellers, Pygmy or villager.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

The dividing line between magic and religion, according to Putnam, is even more difficult to draw with the Mbuti than with other people. His notes, however, do not attempt any analysis. The only other available information on cult practices is a few isolated descriptions in Mrs. Putnam's notes. These, except for the description of burial, are given in the section on Magic (p. 239).

### Death and Afterlife

There is hardly any information on the notions of the net hunters on life after death, except that they firmly believe that life continues in some form or another, in much the same way that it is lived by the living. There is some indication, both from Mbuti informants and from the legends collected by Mrs. Putnam in the Epulu District, that the net hunters believe that when a body dies, a vital part of it, the personality or soul, leaves. It may become either a forest sprite (*satani*), or it may go to some other place where it will have nothing further to do with the living. In either case it will live much as it lived before—hunting and gathering, dancing and singing. *Satani*, however, can die, whereas there is no death in the more remote spirit world.

The net hunters believe that death is caused by the water animal that is the rainbow that is, sometimes, the python. It is not clear whether

[P. 238-B]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

## [NET HUNTERS]

### Magic

The Putnam material contains no information on any vital force corresponding to the *megbe* of the archer Mbuti, but the various practices of the net hunters indicate a belief in some form of force associated with the individual, which can be utilized by him during his life and which is released at death. It is by no means clear that this force can be acquired by magical means, such as by the use of bells and charms among the archers, or that it can be passed on from father to son by the latter's breathing in the breath from the dying man's mouth. There is mention in the Putnam material of this being done only once. 789 • 789

Putnam mentions magic in connection with the hunt and with the weather that might affect the hunt. Magical practices are not mentioned in other contexts, such as protection against one's enemies or, conversely, as aggressive action against them, or for the prevention of imminent disasters such as the falling of a 789

[P. 239-07]

I: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 240-A]

789 [184] tree limb on top of a hut. Such contexts evoke a different response, it seems, among the archers who actively influence the outcome of any critical situation by the use of their *megbe*, often by their *segbe* pipes. The magic described by the Putnams is essentially sympathetic and does not involve any belief in spiritual assistance. Thus stones may not be dropped in the water, or they will cause rain; a bright fire should be smothered until it is a mere glow during a storm, lest it attract the lightning (according to one informant) or in order to drive the lightning away (according to another, in the same discussion). All the magic that Putnam observed among the net hunters was connected with the weather and the prevention of rain, though he does not deny the possibility that magic might be used to stop the rain, once begun.

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789 224 Mrs. Putnam describes a number of magical practices, most of which are connected with either rain or the hunt. The latter simply involve the use of villager witch doctors to perform a ceremony to improve the hunting. The ceremony is never conducted by a Pygmy, nor is it clear on whose initiative it is usually per-

J: Turnbull E-4. 8 (1951-1955) 1985 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



formed. Mrs. Putnam says that the Pygmies may ask the villager to perform the ceremony, but it is also certain that the villagers themselves, if they do not get enough meat from the Pygmies, insist on performing it. The use of a *segle* whistle is mentioned only once by Patrick Putnam. It was incorporated in a hunting net (Figs. 34–35) for the hunter to blow into to attract the antelope. This hunter was the camp joker. *Segle* whistles and pipes may assume many forms, being incorporated in fur headbands (Fig. 51a) or left loose (Fig. 51b). Other hunting magic found among the net hunters, not mentioned by Putnam, is *anjo* (Fig. 51c), an antelope horn in which is kept a paste made of animal parts, rubbed over the eyes and head of the hunter before the hunt.

*Segle* are not to be confused with *madi* (Fig. 51d–e) pipes, which are used only during the honey season.

Rain magic involves the covering of the campfires with leaves but evidently without much faith in the efficacy of this action, as all practical precautions are taken as well, such as putting hunting nets under cover, bringing fire inside the huts, and taking in barkcloth that has been left outside to dry. Further, the use of

[P-240-3]

1: Turnbull E-4. 8 (1951-1953) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[NET HUNTERS]
CP. 240-C )

leaves to cover fires is an effective way of keeping them burning during a rainstorm, is not always accompanied by the production of smoke (thought by some to be an offering), and is never described as being accompanied by any invocation. As far as the descriptions and my own observations go, it could be a simple precautionary measure taken to preserve the all-valuable fire.

Mrs. Putnam was told that barkcloth should not be beaten if it is going to rain, but this may also be for purely practical technological reasons. She once saw an old Pygmy blow a *seghe* pipe a number of times, looking at the sky, in an avowed attempt to avert the rain. When it rained the old man simply shrugged his shoulders and took shelter.

On another occasion, when it threatened to rain and spoil the dance one evening, the young men and boys all seized leaves and ran down to the stream and back, beating the leaves on the ground. They evidently did not wait to see if this magic would work, and all retired to their huts.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

## Magical Practice

P 177 789 It might be observed that the Pygmies have adopted a number of villager magical practices; certainly some individuals give the appearance of having done so. But we cannot accept this as significant, nor can we relate these practices to other practices in Pygmy society until we understand, for instance, the significance of the old Pygmy who blew his magic whistle vigorously at the sky to prevent rain and who, when it poured, simply shrugged his shoulders and retreated to the shelter of his hut. This incident may seem trivial, but there are many such incidents that indicate a lack of faith in the efficacy of such magical practices as the Pygmies attempt.

P [829] P 224 177 789 Also to be considered, and more important because it brings villager and Pygmy together more directly, is the reported resort to villager witch doctors to improve the hunting. Scho-

[P 250-B]

789 177 563 [791]

I: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

[P. 250-C]

besta (1950, 80) mentions ceremonies performed by the archers themselves to "open" the forest. There is no evidence of such a practice among the net hunters, but they may call in a villager for the purpose. But here we should consider Pygmy acumen. If he has not been supplying the villagers with meat for some time, yet has been drawing supplies of bananas, he gives as his excuse the fact that the hunting has been poor. Such an excuse is safe enough, as the villagers never accompany the Pygmies on a hunt. Even if the villagers wait for them in the hunting camp, the Pygmies see to it that they never know how much game was actually caught. But the Pygmy may seek to reinforce his position by inviting the villager to improve the hunting. In doing this, he is a step ahead of the villager, who will himself insist on performing the ceremony if hunting is persistently bad. As far as one can judge from casual conversation among themselves after such a ceremony, the Mbuti have little faith in it. Further, they have their own method of dealing with any critical situation. If the hunting is really bad they convoke the *molimo*. In effect, they "sing" the hunting well: there is no supplication and no prayer. The song may or may not be accompanied by a dance re-enacting a successful hunt, but, even if so, the stress is laid on the song and the participation of all the hunters.

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

In so far as individual magic is concerned, it seems that its practice among the Mbuti, when taken over from the villager, is of no more significance than our own superstitious crossing of the fingers, touching of wood, or avoidance of walking under ladders. When Pygmies call in villager specialists to perform magic for them, mainly to improve hunting, we have at least to consider the possibility of a mere political maneuver.

## Dance and Festivity

Villagers and Pygmies associate frequently at festive seasons or occasions. Pygmies will attend any village festival, and when they have an occasion of their own (such as the killing of an elephant) they first celebrate in their forest camp, then break camp and continue their celebrations in the village.

Dance is an important feature of any celebration, villager or Pygmy, but in this the two never mix. They watch each other's dances with enjoyment, but take part only in fun. One ex-

[P. 250-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1959) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

The primary purpose of the *molimo* for the Pygmies is to maintain and to restore normality in the forest. (We must ignore its possible social function at the moment because of insufficient information.) It fulfills its purpose through song and by the use of the *molimo* horn. The association may meet informally any evening as the men sit around the main campfire. They may sing *molimo* songs as well as hunting songs, but the horn will not be heard. Women and children are not excluded from the group, though, as is their normal habit, they usually keep to their own individual firesides. The association meets formally following any crisis such as death, serious illness, or exceptionally poor hunting. Women and children are then rigidly excluded, and the *molimo* horn is used. These formal occasions compel the attendance of all members. Adult members of the hunting band who are away come back; adult male visitors to the camp take part.

There is no formal body of magical belief and practice among the net hunters, nor, according to Schebesta (1952, 337), among the archers.

[P. 256 - D]

Is Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 257-A]

For the net hunters, the *molimo* is their only means of dealing with the unknown, with situations for which they have no practical, immediately effective remedy. Individuals may and do indulge in the spontaneous practice of sympathetic magic, but this is informal and unsystematized. The *molimo* (and the *elima* to a lesser extent) may be considered "magical" in that the meeting of the association in proper circumstances is believed to restore normality to a situation that has in some way deviated. The "proper circumstances" to which I refer seem to be the non-participation of women and children, the attendance of all adult male members of the band, the use of special songs and the *molimo* horn, persistence in nocturnal meetings of the association, and constant reiteration of the songs until normality is restored. As far as is known, although certainty is lacking, the meeting of the association, which may last for a month, is not accompanied by any taboos on hunting or gathering, eating, or sexual activity. Some doubt exists also as to the position of women with regard to the *molimo*.

1: Turnbull E 4.8 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

difficult to define. Perhaps the nearest approach is to say that, while trickery is not a human quality, it is one that the human (i.e., the Pygmy) can cultivate and use to deal with those to whom it properly belongs—animals, *setani*, and in certain circumstances the villagers.

Another significant feature in this collection of legends is the total absence of reference to witchcraft and sorcery. This is also reflected in daily life, where magical practices are almost non-existent. We are here considering the legends, so shall not digress with a discussion of Mbuti magic, but it seems appropriate to mention the coincidence of two deficiencies—a lack of any real body of traditional folklore, on the one hand, and a lack of traditional magical belief and practice, on the other.[1] Legends are invented *ad hoc* or altered and adapted to suit varying circumstances. Even when answering questions, the Mbuti often invents a myth and tells it as though it were fact. The recounting of an incident during a hunt or while honey gathering often appears in the form of a legend. There

[1] The possible correlation of these two was suggested during a discussion with Dr. Michael Smith at the University of the West Indies. Though he cannot be held responsible for the exact interpretation given here, I am grateful to him for the stimulus.

[P270-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P.291-A]

538 182 • 789 is no standard body of folklore; it is rather a matter for individual, spontaneous invention or adaptation. Now it is reasonable to suppose that a standard folklore is associated with magical belief, for magical belief is no more than a socially accepted way of explaining the otherwise inexplicable. If the reason cannot be clearly seen, it is invented and at least clearly understood. With the Mbuti such is not the case. [761 054 154] There is no common explanation of death or illness in terms of witchcraft or sorcery. A man invents his own legends; he invents his own explanations for abnormal occurrences. The 538 776 nearest approach to standard mythological rationalization is perhaps the popularly accepted myth concerning *satani*. Yet *satani* are not malevolent (they do not wish disease and death on people). Though it is their nature to be dangerous, they are dangerous only when seen. They are essentially tangible. They work in a perfectly understandable way and can be counteracted in an equally intelligible manner.

538 776 Whatever their nature, the essential thing is that, in counteracting *satani* danger the Pygmy in his behavior is absolutely pragmatic. He uses his spear or his bow and arrow and his cleverness. At most the Pygmy will use the common belief in *satani* as an explanation of some minor mishap, the real explanation of which he probably knows but is not willing to admit (carelessness during the hunt, failure while looking for honey, and so on). The belief in *satani* is never used to explain anything more. Yet it is the only common belief of this kind. We are undoubtedly faced, as the legends themselves indicate, with a people with no standard body of magical belief and practice. [719]

It will need further field work and analysis to determine the connection here between myth and magic.

533 771 772 I mention one further factor, which in a way may be said to be magical, and that is the power of song. Yet it is so unlike magic in the accepted sense of that term (with connotations of witchcraft and sorcery) that I do not feel it affects the foregoing hypothesis. Here we enter another world, mentioned again and again in the legends. Unlike the world of animals and *satani*, with which the Pygmy can cope by cultivating cleverness, this world is one in which at first it seems that he has no such weapon. This is perhaps more truly the "supernatural." This is the world of water animals and

[P. 271-B]

I: Turnbull E 4. 3 (1951-1953) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 Mbuti

(p. 274c)

rainbows, of streams where strange things happen, of birds and beautiful songs. (It is also, oddly enough, a world of vine swings.)

However one might quibble about the meaning of the term "evil" and its applicability to animals and villagers, it most assuredly seems to have no place at all in this last world, any more than cleverness or trickery. We return again to the value of normality. We have a fusion of the normal and the supernatural that is difficult to grasp, but in which, I believe, lies the key to the magico-religious system of these Mbuti. It is difficult to determine the exact significance of the part birds play in the legends in the last section, but there is no doubt that the Mbuti associate them in some way with what I am now forced to call the "supernormal" world, that unknown world that lies beyond death. To conclude, I would like to refer to the legend of the Bird with the Beautiful Song, which I mention above.

The curious thing about this legend, and the many variant forms in which the theme is repeated, is the emphasis on the song. Sometimes the narrator sings; these are rare moments that are not easily forgotten and far less easily ex-

Jr Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

plained. But there is a feeling, and I cannot say 533
that it is more than that, that song has power. 538
The song may have no words; it may be a mix- 789
ture of meaningless sounds; but plainly it is
esthetically satisfying to the Mbuti. These
wordless songs are among the most powerful.
When the father killed the bird, he killed the
song, and he dropped down dead, completely
dead, dead forever. In real life, also, song is
powerful. Membership in the religious associa-
tions of the women and the men gives the
Pygmy the right to take part in the singing of
songs peculiar to those associations. In fact, it
imposes a duty to do so. The songs are distin-
guished not by their content but by their
musical style and the technique of performance.
It is the *sound*, rather than the word content,
that matters. These songs are sung, in their
most powerful form, only on occasions of the
greatest distress, such as sickness or death of
one of the great hunters, or failure in the chase.
These are departures from normality. It has
been my contention from an analysis of the
function of music among the Mbuti that song is
believed to restore that normality.

As well as several more obvious differences 538
from villager values, such as emphasis by the 171
[P 271-D] 181

2: Turnbull E-6 (1951-1958) 1961 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



tions, even in the strictest village context, but it is outweighed by what at first seems little more than a lively desire to have all the advantages of village life with none of the disadvantages. Again, it is only through an examination of the interrelationship of the institutions adopted by the Mbuti, and their relationship with the indigenous Mbuti social system, that we can arrive at any true understanding of the apparent process of acculturation.

The attempt by the villagers to assert supernatural control is structurally the most significant, for it involves elements with which the Mbuti have no institutionalized means of dealing. Political pressure the Mbuti can counter by changing allegiance; economic pressure can also be countered, by reverting to the always available pure hunting and gathering economy; as we shall see in the next section, pressure through absorption into the village kinship system is repelled quite simply by the maintenance of an opposed kinship system. However, the Mbuti have no magic with which to counter magic, no witchcraft or sorcery with which to counter witchcraft and sorcery. They do have belief with which to counter belief, but it is part of the belief of both Mbuti and villagers that in a war between the gods, no man can safely predict the outcome. It is in this situation that the villagers do manage to effect some extent of control, but it is also in this context that they come up against the ultimate bedrock of opposition.

Let us look at the various ways in which the magico-religious life of the villagers impinges upon that of the Mbuti, and the extent to which it exerts some measure of control over the hunters and gatherers. Fully recognizing that a clear division of the subject matter is difficult, if not impossible, to make, we nonetheless have to attempt such a division for the purposes of discussion. There is a great deal of overlapping, but nonetheless at the extremes, in this case, the division used here between magic and religion is legitimate.

By *magic* I refer to activities involving, on the part of the African, villager or Mbuti, a conviction in the pragmatic relationship between a cause and an effect which, in terms of Western science, is not demonstrable. The term in its usual sense has meaning only as far as we are concerned, for as far as the Africans here are concerned, magical activities are as scientifically valid as any other. They may not always be able to explain the exact way in which the effect is related to the cause, any more than everyone who drives a motorcar can explain the mechanism. Indeed, the corresponding term "medicine"

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Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa PD1



is usually applied by the African to causal relationships he does not understand but which he still believes to be pragmatic. The mechanism exists, just as surely for the African as for the motorist. Whereas the term "magic" implies, for the Westerner, supernatural intervention, its African counterpart, for villagers and Mbuti alike, has virtually no such connotation. Some "magical" activities are not given any special term other than that for the activity itself. Those that are classified apart as a special type of activity are thought of as curative, and the classificatory term indicates effective function, not supernatural intervention. It is in this sense that we use the word, and in this sense alone that it should here be understood.

*Witchcraft*, on the other hand, introduces other elements, although it is still basically thought of as a scientifically explicable phenomenon, involving certain supernatural powers conveyed by the possession of witchcraft substance, something that can be touched and seen but, being located in the entrails (details as to exactly where, and what it looks like, vary), cannot be removed except at death. But whereas the existence of the powers is explained by the substance, the nature of the powers themselves is inexplicable, therefore supernatural.

*Sorcery* is akin to witchcraft only in that it involves the possession of similar powers. But whereas with witchcraft the powers depend upon the existence of witchcraft substance in the body of the witch and are controlled by that substance, the powers of the sorcerer come to him, or her, through the exertion of willpower, and are therefore controllable by the individual. A witch acts only as such when forced to do so by the substance. A sorcerer acts as such when he wishes to, for whatever purpose he chooses. There is, naturally, a complete terminological distinction between the two in the various local languages: in the lingua franca of the area, KiNgwana, the term *ohwi* is used for witch, *loni* is used for sorcerer. These terms do not necessarily correspond in their usage to the same terms in other Bantu languages, and there is a significant difference between village and Mbuti usages of each term. Needless to say, in that an individual possessing witchcraft substance is not directly answerable for his actions, however grave, he is not considered antisocial. But as a sorcerer directs his power for individual ends, he *is* considered antisocial, and is therefore culpable.

*Religion*, as used here, refers to the realm of belief where there is no attempt to explain supernatural powers in terms of empirical experi-

2: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



which only the villagers *need* a cure. There are a number of such minor crises. Even if the action appears to be protective, it is still basically curative. For instance, theft is common in villages, and villagers have a number of magical cures for theft that prevent it by curing the situation that might give rise to this antisocial act. This may seem like an academic quibble, justifying the inclusion of protective magic under the definition of magic as curative activity, but it is more basic than that. If the Mbuti saw themselves in a future context they might be interested in protection, but one of their characteristics is to think in terms of the present. Theft is not a part of their behavior toward each other; there is nothing they have that the villagers can steal from them, so there is no immediate situation to be cured. But the danger of poor hunting is more real.

For the hunt the Mbuti themselves have divers cures, but mostly of a sympathetic nature and, considering the importance of the hunt, remarkably few. The villagers, on the other hand, have a great number of cures to offer, and if convenient the Mbuti accept them. But once again the question is one of need. From his experience the hunter sees no need to concern himself with the future: it is rare that the hunting is so poor that he goes hungry. It is rare indeed even that there could not be a surplus to trade with the villagers. But lack of meat for trade is always excused by a plea of bad hunting. In fact, the Mbuti even go further and point to the fact that they have no elaborate cures for bad hunting, so how can the villagers blame them for not bringing in meat? The villager then supplies the cures, and if these do not work he will even be told by the Mbuti that it must be witchcraft, and asked to call out a diviner. I know of three cases where Mbuti have been trained by villagers to divine witchcraft and are believed, by villagers, to be highly effective. But once again there is no question of dependence.

Other situations that need curing and that may be cured by empirical (i.e., "magical") means available to villagers alone include poor weather, attack by lightning, attack by a witch, or by the spirits of the forest (*keti*). The cures consist of divers charms and fetish bundles, but they are considered as effective only by the villagers. The Mbuti recognize man's inability to control the weather, though they have a small amount of very simple sympathetic weather magic; lightning strikes where it will, though again fires are covered by the Mbuti during a storm in case the flames attract lightning. As for attack by a witch, their attitude is somewhat ambivalent, but they do not place

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



much faith in a charm against a witch's power, if such power exists; their own remedy is retreat to the forest, where there are no witches. They do not believe in the existence of malevolent *keti*, or spirits, as do the villagers.

In the realm of curative magic, then, the villager has nothing to offer that the Mbuti needs, and has no means of utilizing magic or exclusive village knowledge of magical techniques to control the Mbuti.

## WITCHCRAFT

If it were not for their own misconception of village witchcraft, the Mbuti would be at no disadvantage through their own lack of it. As it is, however, they tend to confuse witchcraft and sorcery, and consequently find themselves dealing with a phenomenon totally outside their forest-world experience—conscious malevolence.

Their confusion is visible in their constant usage of the terms associated with sorcery, even when only witchcraft is implied. The forest hunters are aware of the theoretical difference, but simply do not believe in the existence of witchcraft substance. They are unwilling enough to believe in malevolent supernatural powers, but events combine to persuade them to belief.

Unlike magic, which applies to natural phenomena, witchcraft and sorcery deal necessarily with the supernatural, and create their own need for protection. But whereas the villagers, in their acceptance of the theory of witchcraft substance, can happily accept a fetish bundle as adequate protection, the Mbuti, seeing the whole thing as malevolent sorcery, cannot believe that a bundle of sticks and bones is going to afford much help. Looking at witchcraft—and sorcery—as something belonging essentially to the village world, however, they do have recourse in flight to the forest, where, in their experience, these supernatural powers cannot easily reach. In the village world they can find no protection, and can only hope for an end to the underlying hostility.

Thus witchcraft, which among the villagers is essentially a mechanism for social control, being a concept employed usefully to bring to light hidden sources of dispute and to publicly shame troublemakers, inadvertently gives the villagers a weapon against the Mbuti, while at the same time it drives the Mbuti both literally back into

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



224 dred yards across. However, thirty nets would form a circle, with beaters, which in diameter could be as much as a mile. Such a large area becomes difficult to control and dangerous. Since it is customary for [422] nets to be owned only by married men, and exceptionally by a bache- [554] lor who has proved himself as a particularly fine hunter, it can be seen [162] that a net-hunting band, to be an efficient economic unit, must be limited to between six or seven and thirty nuclear families.

224 476 [593] Insofar as brothers tend to learn to hunt from their father they make ideal hunting partners, and frequently stand in line in the hunt. It is important to know the habits of the hunter next to you, as he will be hidden by the undergrowth and his movements must be anticipated before shooting an arrow or throwing a spear in the direction of any game. Even when game falls into a net there is still danger, since the smallest antelope is vicious when trapped, and the larger animals capable of inflicting serious injury with their teeth and horns. A trapped animal has to be killed as quickly as possible, and anyone nearby will run to the spot with his spear at the ready. Injuries resulting to Mbuti in the resultant melee are not frequent, but when they occur it is almost always between two people who do not commonly hunt close to each other, and who have misjudged each other's movements.

224 476 561 However, there is no rule about brothers setting up their nets next to each other; the order of nets is determined primarily by age, the older hunters occupying the center of the semicircle of nets, the younger hunters at the fringes (conveniently separating fathers from their older sons, with whom there may be some rivalry). A young man is much more likely to choose to hunt beside an unrelated friend of the same age than beside a brother who is much older or younger than he is. A dispute in camp may upset the customary order, but generally the order, once established, remains fairly constant except for the retirement of older men from the center, and the movement inward from the younger men at the extremities. Temporary visitors to the camp usually hunt near the ends of the semicircle, but older men will probably be invited to join those in the center.

224 • 789 882 Magic associated with the net-hunt is slight. If rain threatens there are a few hunters who will try to blow the rain away by allowing moss to fall from their fingers while they blow at it and wave their arms in the direction they wish the clouds to go. Sometimes a whistle is blown, with the same arm-waving. If rain comes despite these activities, there is generally laughter, and the "magician" shrugs his shoulders as though he expected as much.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



though he expected as much. Rather more serious is a medicine called, in the Epulu district, *anjo*. It is a paste made from the heart, brain and eyes, sometimes from other parts as well, of some highly prized game. The paste is charred and placed inside the horn of that animal, which is then inverted and stuck in the ground, usually near the family hearth. The paste is put on the body, most often the forehead, of the hunter and of members of his family. Sometimes it is even offered to privileged friends. It is believed to convey to the hunter the senses of the animal so that he will be able to deceive the animal as well as foresee his movements. However, the use of this individual magic is considered antisocial in many bands, particularly if it appears to be attended by success at the cost of others in the band. It may cause disputes, and then generally all such medicine is collected and burned.

By far the most significant magico-religious acts connected with the hunt are more of the order of religion than of magic. One is the hunting song (with or without dance), and the other is the hunting fire. The song or the dance may precede or follow a hunt. It is distinct from any other form of song or dance. The song form is rather complex and demands co-operation in a manner comparable to that demanded in the hunt itself. The dance is suggestively imitative of a successful hunt, but is by no means mere mime. Like the song form, the choreography is quite distinct, and is not used in any other context.

The hunting fire in the southern part of the net-hunting area takes the form of a fire lit near the trail just before the hunt sets out in the morning. It is generally lit by youths, always at the base of a young tree. When blazing it is covered with leaves, so the heavy smoke is given off. Men and women, as they pass by the fire on their way to the hunt, may stop to gossip, or they may pay no attention. I have not seen or heard of any accompanying ritual or invocation, the only explanation ever stated being that the fire is to rejoice the forest, and it would seem to have the same primary purpose as song and dance, that of attracting the attention of the forest. It is certainly believed that the fire will insure the protection of the Mbuti and help toward success in the hunt.

Further north, another form of hunting fire is used, associated with rather more ritual. There the net-hunters build the fire within the camp, whereas in the south it is always just outside. The fire is sur-

2: Tumbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



rounded by a vine that is carefully staked into the ground by V-shaped twigs. Within the circle long twigs, clean of bark, sometimes simply burned to create a pattern, are stuck into the ground pointing in the direction the hunt is to take place. Any animal caught is brought back and placed within the circle before being divided.

There is undoubtedly village influence to be found in some of the more elaborate magical practices. The Mbuti themselves consider *anjo* as village magic, also the magic sticks within the hunting-fire circle. The fire, however, is used everywhere, and regardless of any other accompanying ritual, there is no ritual attitude toward it other than the belief that it will secure the attention, hence the blessing, of the protective forest.

One clear example of village influence is that in any village context the Mbuti are likely to state sexual taboos connected with the hunt. These vary according to the village tribal custom, and may involve prohibition of sexual intercourse before the hunt, either as a permanent rule (which would be inconvenient for people who hunt almost daily) or for special occasions or classes of people. A menstruating woman and her husband are forbidden to take part in the hunt, according to some village customs. A pregnant woman may be under restrictions, as may be her husband, and childbirth involves further restrictions among many village tribes. To all such customary practices the Mbuti gladly pay lip service. In the forest, however, forest values prevail, and I have come across no sexual taboos associated directly with the hunt. Indeed, the hunt is considered by many, married and unmarried, as an excellent and exciting time to slip away into the bush and copulate. But sexual activity is above everything else a matter of personal taste. If a pregnant woman stays in camp, it is more likely because she feels unwell. If a father stays behind with his wife and her newborn child, it is probably because he wishes to be with them, though there are sometimes stated prohibitions on hunting or eating meat until the family net traps a large antelope. This will be made the occasion for lifting the taboo and for naming the child.

However, it is impossible to discover any consistent pattern of actual behavior, the only consistency appearing in stated behavior, and this relates directly to local village custom, which is based on the belief that the forest is ritually dangerous, unclean. Any villager in a position of crisis, such as becoming pregnant, being born, suffering from sickness or even injury, during menstruation or while near

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



mushrooms, of which there are many edible varieties at any one time throughout the year; the sweet *itaba* and similar roots, which are found by following its telltale vine along the ground, then grubbing with a stick for the roots at the end; nuts, of which there are again many varieties at any time of year; and divers berries. There are also succulent fruits and a few leafy vegetables, though the latter seem rarely used except as herbs. However, they are likened by the Mbuti to the village manioc top, which is cooked as a spinach, and perhaps it is because of the availability of manioc tops and their more pleasant taste that the indigenous vegetable is falling into disuse.

Among the net-hunters, gathering takes place during the course of the net-hunt, on the way to and from the hunt, and between each cast of the nets. Women carry baskets on their backs, with a bark tumpline over their foreheads, as do their young daughters. In the same way that the boys form an age group during the hunt, so do the girls. The boys split into two sections and guard each extremity of their hunting semicircle; likewise the girls split into two groups and beat at each end of the semicircle of beaters. Only the older boys and girls are expected to act as adults, and even they need not necessarily act with their parents. The girls go off on foraging parties on their own, and women go off in twos and threes to do their gathering. There is no recognizable kinship pattern, at least among the Epulu band, to these gathering associations. Women or girls who gather together are likely to be friends of approximately the same age; that is about the only generalization possible.

Men, not having baskets with them, are less able to gather effectively, but if they pass a bank of mushrooms they will pick whatever they can carry without encumbering themselves, and they will send the younger boys back to camp with their arms full.

Gathering, then, is a much more individual affair than hunting among the net-hunters. Even among the archers, where the women are not required on the hunt, they only go off in twos or threes to gather, and the same freedom is allowed for the men to gather whenever they have the opportunity. The spoils are similarly regarded much more as individual property than as communal, though sharing does take place.

There are no rituals and no magic associated with gathering, but insofar as it is primarily a woman's occupation, *elima* songs are frequently sung on gathering expeditions. As with hunting songs, the *elima* songs are designed to attract the attention of the forest deity,

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



and since the forest is benevolent the songs thus are thought to secure protection. In point of fact they do, for the throaty chorus of even two or three Mbuti women is enough to scare away any game. When not singing the women beat their hands together, shout or talk loudly to each other, for the same purpose. I know of only one woman injured while gathering. She was alone, which was the first mistake, and the first question asked when news came back to camp that she had been attacked by a buffalo was the apparently surprising one, "Was she not singing?" She was not, nor was she "talking to the forest," and that was her second mistake, the consequence of which was death. The Mbuti are practical enough to recognize the "noise" value of song, but they see more in it than that.

When the Mbuti are near a source of plantation foods and can acquire them by one means or another, then their daily diet is largely vegetable. The meal taken before going hunting and the snack on the hunt are both likely to be entirely vegetarian, meat being eaten only at the evening meal. Even then it may be served with one or another vegetable. Even when the Mbuti are far away from a supply of village foods and living entirely on the forest they still rely heavily on vegetable foods, and gathering must be considered at least equally important with hunting as a subsistence activity. From what I was able to see, this is true among the archers as well as among the net-hunters. It is also true that throughout the forest the supply of forest vegetable foods, though varying, is constant and sufficient, frequently ample. If there is any time when there is a greater abundance than at other times, it is during the honey season.

## HONEY

Falling approximately in the middle of our calendar year, and lasting a full two months, the honey season is of vital importance to the Mbuti not only from a nutritional point of view but structurally. We have already seen how at this time the net-hunting bands split up into minimal sections, separating hostile or factious elements and consolidating existing friendships, so that when the band re-forms it will have resolved most of the internal dissensions built up over the previous year, on the whole reaffirming old loyalties but always asserting some that are new. The archer band, normally segmented, joins together during the honey season in what is essentially the same process. It is significant that the honey season should be marked

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



out the liquid that drains from it (*kombo*) is caught in leaf cups and drunk. Never is any honey wasted, never is it kept or used in the preparation of other foods; what is not consumed on the spot is eaten or drunk the moment it is brought back into camp.

There is a craving for honey during the season that never seems to be satisfied. No amount of alternative foods, even meat, can reduce this passion for honey. Each band has its own way of listening for the telltale sound of bees swarming. Among some, a leaf is rubbed between the hands, which are then rubbed across the forehead to enable the hunter to see the bees high up in their hives. I found this practice among the eastern archers. Elsewhere, throughout the net-hunting region and also among the western archers, at least, the chameleon (*ameuli*) is believed to lead the Mbuti to honey by uttering a long-drawn-out throaty cry. Chameleons, however, are not known to be capable of making any such noise, and the noted ornithologist Dr. James Chapin claims to have tracked this weird sound down to the *Sarothrura elegans*, a bird with a skinny pouch in its neck that enables it to give an unbroken wail lasting fifteen seconds or more.

But most noticeable among a people who take the success of hunting and gathering so much for granted is the presence of honey-collecting magic, and an inordinate emphasis on song and dance, legend-telling and other recreational activities. There is no doubt that whatever else it may be, the honey season is also a festive season where celebration is the order of the day, even at the cost of a relatively empty stomach.

Some activities are purely recreational, such as spinning tops made of nut sections, and gambling with dried seeds thrown on the ground to make up a total number that is a multiple of four. Others are educational, and in particular the honey swing is for training youngsters in agility at heights, as are the informal contests at climbing dangling vines. The honey swing is suspended from two high branches, so that it has a long, powerful arc. The youths line up and one jumps into the bend of the vine that forms the seat and sets the swing in motion. As the swing moves backwards, a youth runs forward, catching onto the side of the vine, giving it added momentum. As it carries him off the ground, he throws his legs forward and up over his head and into the swing just as the previous occupant jumps to the ground.

The younger children also play with smaller swings, and they have their own game of climbing saplings until there are so many of them that the young tree bends to the ground. The children then leap to

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



Because of the rarity of ritual performances there is one which should be mentioned here, though it seems unique and known only to net-hunters as far as I could ascertain. The ritual involves the building of a fire, with much greater care and concern than the hunting fire or the *molimo* fire, and it is believed specifically that the correct performance of this ritual will lead the Mbuti to honey and/or bring the bees, and their honey, closer to the Mbuti. A full description is given in the section on religion and magic (pp. 231–33). Here it need only be said that the preparations, including the digging of small trenches for water and the use of special woods and leaves, are designed to give the maximum amount of smoke. The lighting of the fire is accompanied by blowing on the *madé*[4] (efe: *segbe*) whistles, through which water is first poured.

All being taken into consideration, the relative lack of magic or ritual associated with food quest, the lack of interest shown in certain readily available forms of food supply such as fish, and the lack of food taboos all confirm the abundance of forest foods and the adequacy of Mbuti technology. This is important in considering the over-all economic system.

## ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF TERRITORY

While the environment does not, through areas of shortage or abundance, determine the location of hunting bands, it does provide natural boundaries which form convenient borders between each hunting band. The total territory is more than ample for the total population, and the even distribution of game and vegetable foods means that there are no preferential areas that might make for rivalry between one band and the next. There is, in any case, a safety factor in that the bands are arranged side by side, in several vast circles, in the center of each of which the boundaries are so loosely drawn that there is effectively a no-man's-land, in which anyone may hunt and where bands occasionally, though rarely, may come in contact with each other.

The only territory to be considered, then, is that of the individual hunting band. This is again, in all cases except possibly the area

[4] The *madé* is a conical pipe, open at both ends, made of two hollowed-out cross-sections cut lengthwise, bound together either by *nkusa* twine or by strips of vine. The pouring of water, which is comparable to the pouring of water through the *molimo* trumpet (see Chapter 14) may have ritual significance, but is explained invariably and unhesitatingly as being necessary simply to get a better sound. It swells the wood and binds the sections closer to each other.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



wooden clappers used only for the accompaniment of honey songs, and started clapping them vigorously while singing. Masisi found the competition too strong, shrugged his shoulders, chased the women away and, taking a pair of *ngbengbe* himself, joined in the singing.

The next day the men and the older youths went honey gathering and brought back enough honey to send some as a gift to Cephu.

7. Laziness is highly criticized among the Mbuti, and is always related to hunger. It is one of the few qualities (noisy hunting is another, "blindness" in the honey season a third) that is countered by public assertion, in mime, dance and song, of the opposite value. One morning, shortly after dawn, there were murmurings of discontent because of the dampness of the forest, and suggestions that there was enough food in camp to allow for a day without hunting. One of the older hunter's wives stalked out into the center of the camp and began an elaborate wordless mime, showing that she was not going to be lazy and stay behind and play and dance "empty" games and dances. She was going to take her husband's spear and go off and hunt (she reenacted a successful hunt) and return with lots of food and share it all around and make her *roho* good and make the forest happy. Then when *she* sang and danced, it would not be empty.

It was a good show, and the whole camp looked on and laughed, then went hunting.

8. One morning, at the beginning of the honey season, a number of hunters set out, as usual, at scattered intervals. Several seemed to be staying behind, so I also remained. After about half an hour the hunters returned, one by one throwing their nets on the ground in the center of the camp. When they were all back, a bachelor youth who had gone with them began a tirade against the hunters who had stayed behind. Hearing his voice, and wondering why he was taking such a prominent part in a hunting issue, women began sleepily coming out of their huts. It was evident that too many had decided to stay home, and the hunt had not had enough beaters. The youth, Pepei, not only criticized the women as lazy animals for not coming on the hunt but also criticized the rest of the hunters, pointing out they had been even too lazy to send their sons with their nets, and had left people like himself, an orphaned youth, to do the work of men.

The hunters had nothing to say, but the women responded vigorously that they were not going to carry nets and spears for the men, they had work of their own to do, and that if enough youths had

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



village itself was being pressed by the administration to increase its productivity at the same time that it was being pressed to supply the administration with more labor. In turn the villagers tried to press the Mbuti into supplying them with more food. Accustomed to a bare subsistence economy, the Mbuti could never quite see the necessity, nor did they altogether feel it was right or that it would be pleasing to the forest. Their belief, as far as I could determine, was not so much that they would be punished by the forest, but rather that the hunt would "be closed," that they would not get the unlawful surplus, that they might not even get enough for themselves.

To counter this the villagers offered divers kinds of medicine[9] for use in the forest, and agreed to make even more powerful medicine in the village. Sometimes the villagers offer to come into the forest, with a ritual specialist, to make medicine. The Mbuti tend to allow this, as it is profitable to them. Occasionally, however, the habit lingers, and whether or not *anjo* was originally a village or an Mbuti custom, it is now considered as a village trick, and disliked as such. *Anjo* is made by taking an antelope horn and filling it with a paste made from special parts of the antelope, charred black. This paste is then applied with a stick to the body of the hunter, to convey to him the senses of the animal.

This custom could sit perfectly well among the archers, where hunting is on a more individual basis. But among the net-hunters its use was taken as a sign of desire for personal gain above communal gain. On one occasion, when the hunting was not particularly good, *anjo* horns were rounded up from all over the camp, eight in all, and destroyed in the central fire. There was some protest from the owners, but not much. It was generally agreed that this made everyone the same, and that was how things should be.

From all the above, and from the rest of the disputes recorded in my notes, totalling 124, not counting the petty daily squabbles of no apparent import other than as an indication of bad temper, one of the most significant features is the small number of cases in which any

[9] Among these medicines is that encouraged by the Arab slave traders in search of ivory, specifically to give success in the elephant hunt. Known as *esumba*, *ishumba*, and divers other spellings, it is sometimes confused with a love medicine of the same name, and even more frequently with the *molimo* of the Mbuti, the word *esumba* or *lusumba* being used to describe the Mbuti *molimo* when speaking in KiNgwana, language of the Arabized Bantu tribe. It is perfectly possible that the two practices became intermingled, both, from the Mbuti point of view, being concerned with the pleasure of the forest.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



CHAPTER 13

# Magic, Witchcraft and Sorcery

## MAGIC

To separate the world of magic from the world of religion is perhaps a dangerous pursuit, and not always profitable. In this instance it is done because we can thereby achieve a significant contrast between the world of the village and the world of the forest. By and large the village world is full of magic, witchcraft and sorcery, leaving little room for what might be considered the more spiritual, or religious, aspects of belief, faith or even hope, and certainly none for worship in the sense of devotion.

The forest world, on the other hand, is remarkably lacking in the former elements, and filled with the latter. But there is an overlapping and, necessarily, a meeting ground where any further overlapping is rejected and which becomes an area of conflict. The Mbuti have their own very simple forms of magic, but no witchcraft or sorcery, which they utterly reject. However, when faced with it in a village context, they are forced to come to terms with it and they have learned to turn these village institutions to their own advantage, in much the same way that they accept other village institutions such as the *nkumbi* initiation.

Increasingly one is aware of a curious ambivalence in the Mbuti attitude toward the village. This is not surprising in itself, when two opposed societies are in such close juxtaposition. But the vehemence of the Mbuti denial of witchcraft and sorcery seems at odds with the meekness of their acceptance, however nominal, of village domination in the village context. The answer lies mainly in the Mbuti attitude to the unknown, an attitude that is optimistic but open. In the realm of the known they can afford to be vehement, and they are perfectly aware of the social values of an institution such as witchcraft, and make use of it without accepting the belief. Similarly with the

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



Similarly with the *nkumbi*, the Mbuti see submission as a means of acquiring status, which is necessary to them if they are to have any part at all in village society. They also see in it, and in witchcraft, a means of defeating the villagers on their own grounds, by proving their superiority. They can do this in the *nkumbi* by being excessively brave, either physically or by flaunting the taboos and thus exposing themselves to supernatural sanctions. They can achieve the same end similarly by pretending to be better witches than the villagers, and indeed the villagers often believe this to be the case.[1]

Nonetheless, the adoption of an institution, for whatever motive, brings a number of results, some of which will inevitably correspond to those expected and desired in the original context. This is a reality, a practical experience, and as such cannot help but somewhat alter the attitude of the Mbuti. In this way they may begin to partially believe in village magic or witchcraft or supernatural sanctions, at least insofar as such belief is not contradicted by the rest of their experience. This ambivalence is particularly marked when they are in the village, which is full of the unknown for the Mbuti, and is correspondingly much less pronounced in the forest. It is with this in mind that we should examine the magico-religious practices of the Mbuti, where there seems to be so much borrowing.

Magic is best defined, for all the tribes in the Ituri region, as the manipulation of material objects which in itself is believed to be the direct cause of certain results, with no invocation or spiritual intervention. It is essentially a natural and, from the local point of view, scientific procedure, having nothing to do with the supernatural.

The villagers have recourse to magical acts, so defined, for almost any circumstance over which they have no other form of control, yet which does not call for the invocation of supernatural intervention. Fertility of men, women and land may be secured by such processes, as may protection against thieves and adulterers; the weather may be influenced, illness may be cured. If the magic takes the form of an amulet to be worn, it may be secured from the local doctor; if it is something requiring more elaborate manipulation, such manipulation is generally considered a professional secret, and certain individ-

[1] The situation is somewhat analogous to that described by Lévi-Strauss (1955) for the Nambikwara chief who understood the principle of writing as a means of communication, and imitated it in order to heighten his status among his band and to intensify his measure of control. In each case the adoption of the institution was not for its original value, but to strengthen a somewhat precarious position. It is probable that the Nambikwara chief was thinking not only of his relationship with his own band but also of that with the European "band."

2: Turnbull E-6 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



uals acquire the reputation of possessing the necessary skills. The doctors in particular possess such skills as part of their profession as diviners and curers, but even they recognize manipulative power in others, and do not try to effect a monopoly.

If the magic fails, it is considered that the manipulation was faulty and will be tried again. Several successive failures will be attributed to the intervention of supernatural forces, and will then involve witchcraft or sorcery.

As shown earlier (p. 54 *seq.*), village magic, even regarded as it should be, in context—as scientifically valid—has little to offer the Mbuti. It may nominally impinge upon their world, for there are, for instance, divers forms of magic to protect plantations against Mbuti raiders. But the Mbuti attitude to magic is different, for they recognize village magic as a mere attempt to control a situation, and not as a scientifically valid process. Brought face to face with such magic they may be wary, but primarily they are skeptical.

In their own world the unknowns are far fewer, and the need for control over events scientifically beyond their control is far less keenly felt. Such actions as may be described as magical, pertaining to health, weather or the hunt, involve an identification with the forest, being forms of sympathetic magic. In this respect, then, they are in a sense religious acts, for the forest is regarded as their protector. It would be difficult to determine whether the hunting fire is meant to placate or propitiate the forest, thus being a religious act involving a belief in a spiritual force, or whether it is thought to actively and directly affect the forest game, luring it into the nets. Mbuti attitudes, both expressed and observable, are mixed; the elements of religious belief, however, are never entirely absent.

The protective "magic" used to secure good health for a newborn baby, a vine bracelet and wooden charm, equally involves in a very real sense a religious belief in the power and strength and protectiveness of the forest, as well as making a more truly "magical" connection between the physical strength of the forest vine and trees and the weakness of the newborn baby, using the charms as a medium through which this strength can flow.

All this makes honey magic all the more outstanding, for it accords honey gathering far more ritual attention than is accorded to the economically incomparably more important activities of hunting and gathering. Some of the magic is slight and individual—a piece of bark cloth belonging to a girl or a woman is put in a cleft stick with a piece

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



of honeycomb pressed down above it. Two sticks are prepared in this way by a hunter, and when the cloth is set on fire the hunter waves them both in the air. He then hands each of them to a youth, and the two youths run through the camp and out into the forest around the camp. The womenfolk clap loudly until the youths return and rather unceremoniously put the sticks down near the central fire.

The honey dance also separates the sexes, the women pretending to be bees, men the honey gatherers. Yet another separation, symbolizing the power of the women, is the medicine that is said to attune one's hearing so that one can hear the larvae wriggling in the honeycombs, high up in the trees. A woman prepares a stick which, when blown through, produces a misty spray. She blows into the ears of all the men. The men say that the bubbling noise they hear is the sound of larvae and grubs eating honey, and that it will guide them to the hives.

There is seldom any doubt as to where honey lies, and it is plainly the social rather than the economic importance of the honey season that is being celebrated. This is most clear in the great *angbe* medicine, in which the age groups are further differentiated and which includes attention to orientation that is quite unique in my experience (this, together with several other features, is so singular that it cannot be adequately explained at the moment, but is nonetheless described for its intrinsic interest).

At the *kuma'ngbe* (hearth of honey), a number of youths chop a special *tembu* wood into kindling (the only time I have ever seen kindling prepared). Four hunters supervise. The four hunters then put their honey axes down in the hearth, blades to the center. One of the hunters lines the axes up so they align with the cardinal points of the compass. This done, each hunter takes his ax and draws it toward him, cutting a trench along that line. In this way four trenches, two feet long and three inches wide and deep, are cut. In the center a square is cut so that the four corners indicate the intermediate compass points. The position of the sun is consulted to insure correct alignment.

A senior hunter has meanwhile cut four lengths of *teka* vine, carefully bound so that its juices do not escape. He removes the binding and allows the juice to fill the center square, after which water is added to fill the trenches. The combination of juice and water is said to be *mota*, or powerful. Each vine is laid in a trench, projecting at the extremities. Two youths then take out the vines and shake them

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



Two youths then take out the vines and shake them in all directions, liberally sprinkling anyone who happens to be standing by. Other youths are by now standing about, whistling on their honey whistles, a form of *madi* called *singbe*. The kindling is then stuck upright in the trenches, beside the *teka* vines, which have been replaced. Children help with this.

A hunter then places a single ember, apparently drawn from any fire, in a *mongongo* leaf and, having filled the center square with *mongongo* leaf stems, he places the coal on top. More kindling is added, crisscrossed much like a house of cards, each piece carefully placed by youths and hunters together. Without fanning, the kindling catches and a dense cloud of smoke is given off. An elder then brings over a bundle of old leaves that have been used for collecting honey, and places them near the fire. He waits until the smoke begins to dwindle, then directs the operation of placing the honey axes in the hearth, waiting for the blades to get warm and then using them to split some *toangbe* wood. The *toangbe* tree and the *tembu* tree are both good honey trees, but the *tembu* tree has to grow "old and fat" before it is favored by the bees.

Elders then carefully arrange the old leaves, adding more as necessary, in a large circle around the fire. Four *singbe* whistles are stuck in the ashes of the fire, pointing to the cardinals. While elders stand and shout, women gather and loudly clap their hands, and both hunters and youths kneel on the circle of leaves, facing in to the hearth, and begin pounding their fists rhythmically on the ground. The tempo increases to a maximum and is broken off with a sudden shout. This is repeated twice more, after which the hearth is abandoned and camp life resumes as though nothing had happened.

The Mbuti themselves are unable to give any satisfactory explanation of the performance, and it seems to combine elements of genuine magic (for they talk of the smoke attracting the bees and bringing honey to them) and of invocation of supernatural intervention (the *keti* are said to hear the pounding on the ground and will know that the Mbuti want honey). Whatever it may be thought to achieve, however, *angbe* (also *angbelu*) undoubtedly reiterates the division of the band into age groups, a division that is evident throughout the net-hunting season but is not so necessarily a part of activity during the honey season.

However regarded, Mbuti magic implies belief and is to that extent religious, no matter how much it may also be thought to have direct causal attributes, and the belief always supposes the benevolence of

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1



the power believed in. There is not a solitary instance to show the belief in a malevolent power against which protection must be sought. This is plainly different from village magic, which is essentially pragmatic and not in any way related to a central value system. We showed earlier (pp. 53–62) how magic does not provide a means by which the villagers can control the Mbuti. By a comparison of the two systems of magic we can see in effect how clearly they indicate major value differences despite initial outward similarities. In particular, the Mbuti attitude to the forest as a benevolent central value in their lives can be seen, and while in village magic we see only the lack of such a central value, when we examine witchcraft and sorcery we see its exact polar opposite.

And it will be remembered how (pp. 57–59) the Mbuti recognize the difference in attitudes toward magic, and put it to good use. The villagers regard Mbuti culture as impoverished in all respects, and the lack of the magic so abundant in village life is part of their argument. In making this lack of magic an excuse for the allegedly poor hunting that has deprived their *kpara* of meat, the Mbuti turn the situation nicely to their advantage, and turn the argument of the villagers against them. Thus although village magic and forest magic are different and distinct, the areas overlap in such a way as to deepen the opposition between the two worlds.

## WITCHCRAFT

With witchcraft the situation is different, for this is something peculiar to the village world. Earlier (pp. 59–60) we showed some of the ways in which village witchcraft (often confused by the Mbuti with sorcery) impinges on forest life. Again, the villagers regard the lack of witchcraft in Mbuti culture as a sign of cultural poverty, and in their own belief in the power of witchcraft they seek to use it in their constant struggle to impose some kind of control over the hunters. However, the Mbuti again make use of the village belief in witchcraft for their own ends, using it as a means of escape from situations in which they would otherwise be culpable and stand to lose a good exchange relationship.

In their own forest world, however, witchcraft plays no part, except insofar as it is recognized as a useful device for deflecting blame, and is thus occasionally used, tongue in cheek, to resolve a dispute. As indicated in the foregoing chapter, the prime objective in the settle-

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



to their forest sanctuary, and describing their tactics for keeping it free of bothersome, elephant-like villagers. Hunting is not mentioned; the two spears (and in the next legend the two firebrands) are uniquely related to the *molimo*, which, as is seen in the next chapter, offers major roles to the elders and the youths; precise age levels are specified in this legend. Thus the defense of the forest is considered as part of the role of the *molimo*. There is significantly no talk of a resort to magic or witchcraft or sorcery, and the mention of the evil spirits is accompanied by no belief in them.

In the second legend, however, the first part is a very straight description of exactly how an Mbuti might cheat a villager simply by concealing a portion of his honey, whereas the second part describes how the Mbuti is himself cheated. The second part alone could be taken as another way in which Mbuti explain to villagers why they have no meat or honey for them (see a third legend at the end of this chapter for such an example), but in this juxtaposition seems to indicate a certain belief that the Mbuti themselves might be cheated in this way.

## LEGEND OF DOUBLE TRICKERY

I went to the forest to collect honey. I went, I went, I went. I went very far, beyond the big river [an indication of trespass, perhaps, making it a situation displeasing to the forest; hence the ultimate defeat of the Mbuti?]. I heard the sound of bees. Way up high I saw the place of the honey. I said, "Ha! Nobody has enclosed this tree with a vine; it is my tree, it is my honey."

I sharpened my ax, very sharp indeed. I cut a vine, I fanned up my fire and put the fire [smoking embers] in my basket. I began to climb. I climbed, I climbed, I climbed. The honey was very high up, it was real honey, not *apuma* [a special fermented honey]. I reached it. I fastened the vine and I sat. I put the fire [in a leaf cone] into the hole and I blew. Much smoke came and the bees ran away. I chopped, I chopped, I chopped. While I was cutting I heard someone walking below. "Ah! Who is walking below me? It is my master [*kpara*]. He heard me cutting [the adverse aspect of noise] and followed me."

I began to sing. I sang loudly. He called to me, but I pretended that I did not hear him. I sang and I chopped. I sang, "Ah! I am chopping out honey to give to my *kpara*!" And slowly I chopped out the honey. I got a lot of it. But I only put part of it in my basket. The

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



This was not an isolated instance, though such dancing and singing are generally confined to youths and younger married people. The erotic aspect of the relationship between forest and Mbuti is also seen in the very clear individual preferences for certain types of place in which it is found good to the *roho* to have sexual intercourse, such as by a stream, or in dark shade, or in a patch of sunlight or moonlight, or during the hunt, but in the forest rather than in the hut.

The perennial certainty of economic sufficiency, the general lack of crisis in their lives, all lead the Mbuti to the conviction that the forest, regarded as the source of *pepo* and of their whole existence, is benevolent, and that the natural course of life is good. The absence of magic is not necessarily an indication of technological mastery; in this instance it is simply an indication of the normal absence of crisis. We indicated that such magic as existed was not without its spiritual aspects, and might possibly be better classified as religion. For instance the use of vine and wooden charms on an infant to convey the strength of the forest to the child is not thought to achieve its end directly, by physical transference alone. Physical contact with these materials is considered strengthening, and certainly the juice of the vine in which infants are bathed is thought to have strengthening properties, but these things are also considered "pleasing to the forest" (*babongisa ndura*). This phrase constantly recurs, and shows the belief in the awareness by the forest of its "children" and their needs. Such acts and many others, by physically relating the individual to the forest, are believed to create an added awareness of the Mbuti by the forest. It is not only the strength of the forest that is wanted, but its affection.

## THE POWER OF SOUND

Birth is attended with an undemonstrative concern to establish this relationship between the forest and the individual, and it is reinforced at puberty by what might also be considered in some respects as magic, but which is more essentially religious, and that is song. The mere attachment of a vine to the wrist or around the waist requires that amount of effort and no more. Song requires continued effort, is more direct and personal, and consequently more powerful—its goal is identical. Song above all else is believed to attract the attention of the forest, and to please it. "Sound is very strong indeed; noise is bad, but song is good" (*S'uti mota ningo'e, akami sinana'e;*

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



"strong" has the same double meaning that it has when used to describe song. In using either the Ngwana term (*nguvu*) or the Bira term (*mota*), the Mbuti may imply difficulty as well as sheer physical strength. A sudden noise that is *mota* has an inherent power of its own. A song or whistle has power only if it is properly performed. The proper performance is not so much the following of a prescribed pattern, though there may be and usually is such a pattern, if general, but rather the transference of *pepo* so that by contact with *pepo* the song or the whistle becomes *mota*. Singing or whistling not so touched with *pepo* is "empty noise," and doubly bad. Whistling is widely used to arrest action of any kind. In everyday life, whistling brings the movement of all hunters and beaters to an immediate stillness and stops all sound among them. The sign for them to continue is an imitated animal cry. In the camp, if someone thinks he hears a foreign sound—of approaching people or game, of a "crying" tree (a tree starts creaking some days before it falls, and this is referred to as "crying")—he whistles to call for silence so that all may listen and hear. During the *molimo* songs, particularly, but during any song, also, whistling softly brings the song to an end. A sudden storm is likely to bring shrill whistles, though nobody claims to even hope for them to stop the storm, though they all say it is worth trying. They explain that whistling is effective in other realms because it is the affair of the Mbuti, but it will not stop a storm because that is the affair of the forest.[8]

All such whistling is done with the lips. Whistles are also made of seeds and carved from wood, however, and though the seed-whistles are purely for children to play with, the wooden whistles (*piki*, *segbe*) have special usages. Rarely, a small whistle may be attached to a net, and although functional it is never blown. Similar whistles are used by those net-hunters who build a hunting fire in the camp, and are placed within the vine circle surrounding the fire, again not blown. Larger whistles made of two semicylindrical sections of wood and bound together by vine or *nkusa* twine, tapering to a point at one end (left open so it can be stopped with a finger) and notched for blowing at the other end, are sometimes attached to a fur cap worn by hunters, and may be blown before the hunt, possibly during a hunting dance. Similar whistles made of *angbe* wood, from the *angbe* tree that provides most of the honey, are used during the honey season

[8] Cooper (1941, 24 seq.), in drawing comparisons between the Semang, Andamanese, and Eta, finds much similar interest in noise.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 Mbuti

[P 276-K]

142
302
534

39. The musical bow, apart from the wooden clappers used during the molimo and during the honey season, is the only musical instrument that seems to be original to the Mbuti. Even this is slightly used, the one here simply being a hunting bow tapped by an arrow, the mouth acting as the resonator. An extremely musical people, the Mbuti are, unlike the villagers, vocal rather than instrumental.

40. Balekimito, the old lady who "died well," and for whom the exceptionally long molimo festival was held. The charm around her neck, stolen from the villagers, would have been regarded by the Arabized Ngwana as powerful magic. For her it was a mere ornament.

142
302
301
886
765
789

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



sanctions, does not hold good for Mbuti society, where the three principles are inextricably fused. One might be able to talk of law, even if law implies sanction by force, for the Mbuti believe that the forest has such power and force and will use it. Indeed, in their experience it does, for transgression is met with the force of *akami*, which kills. This is thought of as a very direct and practical response on the part of the forest as the law. On the other hand, public opinion can hardly be said to exist, for there is no public spokesman, and every opinion on behavior is expressed in terms of pleasing or displeasing the forest. Such public action as may be taken—ridicule or ostracism—is taken in the name of the forest. Exile is literally being sent to the forest to meet it directly. Religious sanctions are not differentiated from any others; the threat is the same—noise and displeasure.

Ultimately, then, in our consideration of territory, despite the obvious practical values involved and a certain extent of ecological determination of behavior patterns, the territory as a principle of organization must be regarded as a religious principle. Indeed, life itself, for the Mbuti, can almost be regarded as a ritual designed to please the forest and secure *ekimi*. There is, as noted, an almost total absence of magic, and the only ritual that can be truly considered as such, and is not otherwise a necessary daily activity, is song. We have seen that song is designed specifically to rejoice the forest, and to draw its attention to its children, but beyond this and its reinforcement, through musical technique, of the values of age and cooperation, there is nothing particularly remarkable about it as a social institution.

It is only when we come to death that there is a marked departure from the normal tenor of life, and a ritual, the *molimo*, that might be regarded as a ritual in the Durkheimean sense of recreating society and reaffirming the social sentiment. While any interpretation of religious ritual of this kind is highly questionable, the attempt has to be made.

Leaving aside the "legal" aspect of the *molimo* when it appears in the early hours of the morning to wreak havoc in the camp, there are few rituals that could be more explicitly concerned with the "recreation of society" in the most literal sense. Death is the most final and inescapable of all crises, and for it there is no remedy. But it threatens more than the life of the individual; it threatens the continuity of the band, and so threatens the ritual of life by which the forest is pleased. Death itself is recognized as deriving from the forest, so is accepted

Death itself is recognized as deriving from the forest, so is accepted with regret, but there is enormous concern to conceal the regret and avoid any excessive show of grief, for crying is *akami*. The uncomfortable fact of death has to be obliterated from the memory as quickly and effectively as possible, and the band, which has received a blow at its strength, must be rejuvenated in an exaggerated display of all the things pleasing to the forest—good hunting, singing, dancing, feasting and, above all, *ekimi*. More than this, the *molimo*, as we have seen, is a means of reaffirming the effective division of the band into age groups, and through both the participation of the old lady, who demonstrates the power of the women over the men, and through the *ekokomea* dance, the lack of sex differentiation is emphasized. *Ekokomea* may also be regarded in a similar light as the erotic dance over the fire, where the men symbolically copulate over the scattered embers, fanning them to life. Certainly the sexual act is represented in the *molimo* dances, if not in the symbolism of the *molimo* trumpet itself and the way in which it is handled, and there is very evidently expressed concern with the regeneration of life.

The *molimo* is also an occasion on which the band reaffirms all its interpersonal loyalties, and its unity as a band, regardless of kinship considerations. (This is not to deny that the band, and the *molimo*, may at one time have had a more definitely lineal structure.) It is significant that it insists on participation by all adult males, including not only affines but adult visitors living temporarily with the band under an obligation, default in which is punishable by death. Such death itself is said to be brought by the *molimo*; informants differed as to *how* death would actually take place—some said by two spears, some by beating—but in all cases it was held that the *molimo* would bring death to any who did not fulfill his obligations.

Thus the forest is intimately associated with the Mbuti at death, just as it is at birth. The same forest that gives life and strength through the juices of the vine, and through the vine and wooden charms tied around an infant's wrist, may bring death to that infant, if as an adult he fails to rejoice the forest during the *molimo* festival.

Fire, which is the gift of the forest, but whose ownership is disputed, is central in the life of the Mbuti, representing life itself. (One legend has it that fire was first owned by a chimpanzee; another by woman; another by the *keti*. In any case, man [Mbuti] ultimately stole it and now possesses it.) During the *molimo*, men pass their hands through the flames and then rub gently over their faces. The *molimo* trumpet is passed over the flames. Sometimes men put coals

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



widely practiced in the mimetic hunting dances, by which it may be supposed that the dancer is trying, magically, to influence the action and movement of the game. In this light the Mbuti acceptance of the *nkumbi* seems more plausible, as a "magical" means of gaining power over the villagers. It is not entirely unlike the situation described by Beattie (1960, p. 78) for Nyoro reactions to foreign powers such as Europeans, Polish expatriates, and airplanes. The Nyoro attempt was to gain some control over the situation by becoming possessed by the spirits of these foreign powers.

There may also be a certain amount of seepage of village beliefs into the Mbuti subconscious, despite the formidable structural opposition they have raised to all such influences. There is certainly cause to think that the village beliefs of witchcraft and sorcery, confused as they are by the Mbuti, nonetheless have for them a certain sinister ring of conviction.[9]

It is perhaps for that reason that the only plainly discernible symbolism evident in Mbuti ritual is concerned with life. Of all the oppositions between the forest and the village, such as abundance/hunger, unity/disunity, moral/immoral, equal/unequal, cool/hot, song/silence, quiet/noise, the most significant are undoubtedly the last two, for silence and noise are associated ultimately with death. If the Mbuti suspect there are, in the village, supernatural powers with which they should come to terms, it is for purposes of defense. And they see their major defense in the power of their own supernatural, the forest.

Their desire is to counteract the forces of hunger, disunity, immorality, inequality, heat, silence and noise, forces that amount to death for the Mbuti. Their focus of attention is on the preservation and continuation of life. The relatively simple ritual, if it can truly be called that, of the *molimo* festival is supercharged with an emotional concern, a burning desire, for life. As might be expected, it reinforces those aspects of Mbuti society that require constant attention: age divisions are clearly symbolized in the three fires for the three upper age groups; the value of sharing (on nonlineal grounds!) is emphasized in the technical division of the songs, again bringing in division along age lines and demanding close cooperation; the reluctance to share is symbolized at the same time as the friction between youths

[9] Again, a linguistic study might help greatly, not only through separating institutions and concepts that derive from different tribes, but in revealing the location of hidden areas of forest/village opposition. Unfortunately we still lack any published studies of KiNgwana, KiBira and KiLesé, let alone of the divers Mbuti groups.

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



spirit-animal and he was going to attack you so I drove him into the hole and I dare not leave it or he will come out and kill you! Run and get your spear and save me, your poor Pygmy!" The villager was scared out of his wits and ran away. Asofalinda promptly hid the plantains elsewhere and quickly returned to the hole.

At this point in the story, Masamba, Njobo's wife, came to help act out the rest. Asofalinda crouched at the foot of a tree, pretending that she was covering a hole in the ground, and Masamba, acting the part of the villager, crept onto the scene, carrying a spear and looking very frightened. As they acted the scene, the villager came up behind Asofalinda and asked timidly if the spirit-animal was still there. "Yes," said Asofalinda, over her shoulder. "But I have used my magic and sung it to sleep so that you will be able to kill it. But you must be very quiet and very careful. You are the only one who could do it, you are so big and strong and clever, not like we poor Pygmies."

Saying this, she slowly uncovered the hole and whispered to the villager to stoop down and peer in. Masamba then cautiously bent over and peered into the imaginary hole. "No," said Asofalinda, "you will have to look deeper. It is a big hole and the spirit-animal is right at the back. But you must be very quiet or it will wake up and kill you first." So Masamba stooped lower and Asofalinda finished the scene with no further commentary. It was hardly necessary. She crept behind Masamba and kicked her heartily in the backside, and ran off laughing and clapping her hands with mirth. Even Masamba, who suffered the brunt of the joke, enjoyed it so much that the two of them re-enacted it four times that one afternoon.

In ways like this, even on a rainy day when there is no hunting or gathering to be done, a camp can be made lively and entertaining. But generally rain brings depression. People sit in their huts and peer out miserably. On the whole, however, the tenor of life is even, wet

MOLIMO: THE DANCE OF DEATH

But at the central fireplace there was always a basket of food, showing that it was a kumamolimo, the only outward indication that the God of the Forest had been invoked and was waiting silently nearby, in the trees or in the Lelo itself, ready to enter the camp at night and join his people in their songs of joy and praise. The casual observer might have thought the youngsters were playing a game when they went around from hut to hut with a fishing line and a basket, collecting food from everyone. There was certainly nothing about their demeanor to indicate that this was an essential part of a great act of communion. And if the same observer were told that this was so, he would probably form the opinion that the molimo, whatever it was, could not mean very much if it was treated so lightly and casually.

This, in fact, is the opinion of the villagers. For them the ritual act is the important thing. In their religious rites it is the correct performance of the ceremonial that counts most. If correctly performed it is bound to bring the desired results, regardless of the accompanying thought, if indeed there is any. All attention is focused on the act itself. And it must not only be performed correctly, but with a solemnity that betrays fear.

The difference between the two attitudes is perhaps one of those fine shades of difference that divide magic from religion, though there is so much overlapping that they can seldom be divided in practice. Whereas the villagers believe that the act itself brings about results in a way they cannot explain, which is what we call magic, the BaMbuti do not believe this at all. They believe in a benevolent deity or supernatural power which they identify with the forest. To this they owe as much respect and affection and consideration as they owe to their own parents, and from it they can expect the same in return. So, for the Pygmies, it is not so much the act itself that counts, or the manner in which the act is performed, but the thought that goes with it. The collecting of food from hut to hut is not a

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti



either a pith helmet decorated with gennet skin, or else a long-haired wig of monkey fur. In his hand he carried a metal walking stick that had once been the handle and stem of an umbrella. Sometimes he wore the gennet skin around his waist, or tucked into his belt, or hung from his neck. It was the symbol of his ritual authority, and it contained the charms from which he derived his power. Generally Sabani was a kindly and gentle man, wise and good. But his loyalties were narrow, confined to his own kin and a few friends. Beyond that circle he was a man to be feared rather than trusted.

Eboyo also had its Pygmy village, not far from the main village, but Sabani preferred to keep his Pygmies in the forest where the administration could not see what they were doing. Generally they were tending illicit plantations, of hemp among other things. Sabani also had his own still, where he used to have a powerful spirit made from manioc. He was frequently drunk but never incapable. At all times he was an imposing and commanding figure. In his village there were some thirty families, including Kapamba's. Camp Putnam and Dar es Salaam were about half that size.

The attitude of all these villagers to the forest was the same. They made their villages as open as possible, and they built their houses without any windows. They tried to ignore the world around them, because for them the forest was hostile, something to be feared and fought. Even after cutting it down there was the constant labor required to keep it from growing back. It was filled with evil spirits that cursed the soil so that although it would bear gigantic mahogany trees it would produce only the most meager fruits for the villagers.

The tribes of this area had once been plains dwellers, with herds of cattle, living in the friendly open spaces of East Africa. When they were driven into the forest by more powerful tribes, they brought as much of their plains culture with them as they could. But their cattle died off, and they had to live by cultivation alone. They